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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3996

INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RHMFIS/EUCOM POLAD VAHINGEN GE PRIORITY

RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEHAK/USDAO ANKARA TU PRIORITY

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC//USDP:PDUSDP/ISA:EUR/ISA:NESA// PRIORITY

RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEUITH/ODC ANKARA TU PRIORITY

RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC//J-3/J-5// PRIORITY

RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK PRIORITY

RHMFIS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY

RHMFIS/425ABS IZMIR TU//CC// PRIORITY

RHMFIS/39ABG INCIRLIK AB TU PRIORITY

RUEPGAB/MNF-I C2X BAGHDAD IZ PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 002524

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [TU](#) [US](#) [AM](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: TURKEY: MANAGING PUBLIC OPINION ON ARMENIAN
GENOCIDE RESOLUTION

REF: A. ANKARA 2522

[1](#)B. ANKARA 2517

Classified By: Ambassador Ross Wilson, reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: With the capital emptied out for the end-of-Ramadan holiday, PM Erdogan and others in the GOT are carefully managing public opinion on the House Foreign Affairs Committee (HFAC) passage of the Armenian genocide resolution (AGR) and declining to detail retaliatory measures the GOT may be considering. They remain angry but reasoned. Erdogan used a phone call from Secretary Rice as a hook to tell the press that he had expressed his dismay and she had stated the US Administration's determination to continue to fight the measure. The military has cancelled participation in a US-based conference, but did send a General across to northern Iraq October 11 for a scheduled meeting with his US counterpart in Erbil. Columnists are taking an unusually introspective line, pointing out that Turkey brings this on itself by failing to debate the issues openly. End summary.

[1](#)2. (U) PM Erdogan spoke to the press twice in the past day. The evening of October 11, he said Secretary Rice had phoned him to express her regret over HFAC action and US Administration efforts to try to prevent passage by the full House would continue. The PM is reported as having responded that AGR passage would serve neither the US's nor Armenia's interests. Erdogan described HFAC's vote as "a very, very unfortunate decision. He added that GOT would press forward to prevent AGR passage by the House. If it did pass, he stated, "there are steps we will take." He declined to go into detail, stating that the GOT would not talk about steps beforehand, it would simply take them.

[1](#)3. (U) The morning of October 12, caught by the press after emerging from an Istanbul mosque following holiday morning prayers, Erdogan focused on holiday greetings but answered journalists' questions on AGR and broad parliamentary authorization, expected next week, for a cross-border operation (CBO) into Iraq. Erdogan emphatically denied that Turkey's Ambassador to the US, Nabi Sensoy, had been recalled to Ankara; he was coming for consultations at MFA. On a CBO, the PM characterized parliamentary authorization as another

element the GOT would have in hand, ready if it is needed. He stressed Turkey's support for Iraq's territorial integrity, referenced his meeting with Iraqi PM Maliki and the agreement they had signed, as well as the more recent bilateral counter-terrorism agreement and the trilateral process with the US and Iraq. If the PKK violence did not stop, the GOT would decide what was in Turkey's best interests.

¶4. (U) While AGR remains splashed across the front pages of the papers, media commentators have been unusually introspective. With few exceptions, they pointed out that Turkey would not find itself in its current situation, had there been a more open debate about the events of 1915. One commentator noted that Turkish Penal Code Article 301 (which criminalizes "insulting Turkishness") prevents an open and honest debate, and urged that 301 be lifted to allow for a rational national discussion. Turkey's failure on this score and the resulting harsh reactions out of Ankara only add fuel to the fire of AGR proponents. A few strongly nationalist voices call for retaliation.

¶5. (C) With respect to activity on the Turkey-Iraq border -- a topic of considerable press coverage, both AGR-related (as pundits speculate what sort of retaliation the GOT and military may choose if AGR passes the full House) and PKK-related, the situation remains calm, with no unusual military activity reported in or around Silopi or Habur Gate on October 12. The local Turkish Special Forces commander completed his travel to Northern Iraq to meet with his US counterpart, and returned to Silopi on October 11, an indication of a desire to continue to cooperate on Iraq. However, Turkish Coast Guard Commander Rear Admiral Can

ANKARA 00002524 002 OF 002

Erenoglu cancelled his participation in the US Chief of Naval Operations-sponsored international sea symposium, as Admiral Atac had earlier, a move briefed to the press as AGR-related.

¶6. (U) Media are also reporting that Turkish reinforcements are being sent to jandarma stations close to the Turkish-Iraqi border, and that KRG Peshmerga are fortifying their mountain positions on the Iraqi side of the border. Turkish media also report KRG spokesman Jemal Abdullah as saying that a military operation would not help resolve the security situation on the border; other methods must be used to solve the problem.

¶7. (U) The Mission's security posture remains unchanged; all is quiet at the beginning of the holiday weekend.

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